

month. Or, if he wasn't willing to do that, I would have this work done and charge him in rent for it and I wouldn't start paying rent until I'd used up my \$100 a month, which would have taken about a year. Well, actually I lived there and we had quite a group. When Mrs. Hoge was away I had a cook, a good cook, and a houseboy. We heated entirely by fireplaces so this houseboy came and made the fires and did that work, and the cook took care of the house. That summer, when everybody started moving around, I know they sent a class down there to go to the waterways station, what do you call that?

Q: Waterways Experiment Station.

A: They sent a class of young engineers down there. They'd been out of West Point about three or four years. They sent them down there to take the course and all these, oh, about eight of them, I think, these boys came in and they had no place to stay. So I had a partially empty house, four or five bedrooms, and I told them that I would take them, let them stay there, and they could pay their part of the meals. They wouldn't have to pay any rent or anything else. Just pay for their portion of meals and I'd appoint one of them the mess officer and he'd keep accounts and charge everybody their portion of the meals.

Memphis

And then Oliver was there, "Bugs" Oliver; he was leaving, and somebody else and General Ferguson came to town, and he had no place to stay and I offered him to come up there and stay until I had to leave. So they all did. And we had a brigadier general and a couple of colonels and these six, about six, lieutenants and myself all living in this house, splitting up the food; and everybody had his own keg of whiskey, moonshine, and we'd get out and have a happy hour in the evenings in front of the fireplace. It was a right comfortable place and they all enjoyed it. Those kids thought it was fine. They did a lot of dancing and hell-raising all night long, and they'd come in at midnight or two o'clock in the morning and go to work at the laboratory the next day. They were all over Louisiana, Mississippi, up into Arkansas. I don't know where all they went. They enjoyed it. I stayed there until I had to move to Memphis that fall, and I went up there as assistant to Somervell and we got along all right. I was his number three down the line, but I worked there on

surveys and running the—I've forgotten what I was doing. I was working on the river mostly. Anyway, Somervell didn't get along well with Ferguson because he'd had a run-in with Ferguson in Washington, DC. So he began to finagle around to get out from under Ferguson, and he was only there about a year and he got an assignment to Turkey. When this other officer, who was above me, got another change of assignment, I was the senior officer there. I was only a major then. I guess I was a major. I was way down the line. That was the biggest district in the United States, spending more money and covering the largest territory. Ferguson liked me and he offered me the District Engineer. I got the appointment. So I was District Engineer when I wound up. I wound up on top of the heap with Somervell going to Turkey, so I was the boss of the lot and I stayed there.

I wanted to go to the War College, but there was only one opportunity to go to the Philippines for an officer of my rank, and I wanted to get that foreign service and I wanted to go to the Philippines. That vacancy was coming due that year, and it wouldn't be open again for three years. There was only one position for my rank. So I asked General [Edward M.] Markham, who was Chief of Engineers then, to give me that assignment, and he did, very much to my surprise. So I got that assignment to the Philippines and went there.

Q: You went to the Philippines in May of 1935. You had the District for almost 18 months as the District Engineer.

A: Yes, I was up in Memphis for about two and a half years, I guess, I don't remember.

Q: Yes, sir, you were in Memphis from September 1932 to May 1935, about two and a half years, and the last part of it as District Engineer. Well, being the District Engineer, did that sort of solve your previous dis-appointment with Engineer work?

A: Oh, that was a great job. I was all over the place. I had a lot to do building levees, had a lot of contracts. I think at one time I was employing about 14,000 between the contract work and the hired labor work on dikes and levee construction, and I was working under General Ferguson, who was one of the greatest persons I ever knew.

Q: He was the Division Engineer working out of Vicksburg?

A: He was the president of the Mississippi River Commission and Division Engineer. He had Memphis, Vicksburg under him—Memphis, Vicksburg, and New Orleans District, the second district. The first was down on the Gulf; they worked out in the Gulf. The other worked on these levees. Our principal problem was levee construction, and we had a lot of that.

Q: Did you have any rechanneling work at that time for flood control?

A: We started it. General Ferguson was the one who introduced that because before that—well, the plan which they originally had was going to have this floodway. We had opened up the New Madrid floodway, which is right opposite the mouth of the Ohio where it comes over and down through Missouri. There's a dike that could be, I mean a levee that could be topped with a certain height of water and that was a relief on the major plug. And there were other plans, but they were disapproved. But General Ferguson started this making cutoffs in the river. That had always been thought to be very dangerous and had never proved right. But he started the cutoff business and made several of those. We were doing a lot of dredging. We got dustpan dredges from the ocean. We had big suction dredges. We had about, I think, about three or four big dredges in my district alone and they were big ones.

Q: You know now one of the biggest considerations for any type of flood control or river work is the ecology of the area and environmental considerations.

A: I know—that's all new.

Q: You didn't have any of that to contend with at that time?

A: Except the taking of lands and so on and setting back of levees. Of course, we had to do that from time to time. There was this Atchafalaya proposition down off of the Red River.

Q: Atchafalaya?

A: Atchafalaya floodway which was built. It's down below where the Red River, just before the Red River comes into the Mississippi. The Atchafalaya floodway was built from that. That also had a dike that could be topped and go out at a certain height of water so it would relieve the Mississippi. The big problem was relieving New Orleans itself, and they built a spillway above New Orleans. That concrete, what's the name of that? A classmate of mine was in charge of that. That was under the New Orleans District Engineers. I had nothing to do with that. At a certain point, that went out and they could divert water. And it went out into the Gulf to bypass New Orleans.

Q: They have a similar project going on around Tampa now. They are putting a bypass canal around the city of Tampa to prevent flooding. Of course, they couldn't complete the part of the cross-Florida canal. The project was inflicting trouble [environmental]. So that sort of restored your faith in being an Engineer, I guess, being District Engineer?

A: Yes, it was all right. I got along fine. General Ferguson was a great person, had a great sense of humor, great number of stories. He was a good engineer, and he was original. He wasn't following things that for a hundred years they had said wouldn't work. The old idea was that once you shortened the Mississippi River that all it would do was cut through someplace else, and his theory was that you could make these cutoffs around these big bends and shorten it. And by proper handling of it and dredging at the time the cutoff was made to develop it, it would work; and it did. They lowered the flood level by several feet. I don't know how much above Natchez and Greenville and so on.

Q: So that relieved the upper part of the river?

A: Well, it relieved wherever they made the cut down below. There was an interesting anecdote: General Ferguson always took everything back to North Carolina, where he was born and grew up as a boy. There was a fellow named Dean who was an engineer down in New Orleans. Dean was a pusher—always trying to get ahead on something. And they started these cutoffs, and Dean came up one day with a roll of maps to plan some cutoffs. He had more cutoffs that you could think of, and he was cutting

off every neck of land. General Ferguson had just started, I think he had one or two under way, and was working with them to find out how they worked. And Dean spent all Saturday morning explaining his plans on these cutoffs. And the old man was smoking a pipe; he looked at it and said, "Dean, I'll tell you about this old Tom Jeffries [or somebody, I've forgotten his name now] down in North Carolina. He came down to the corner store one day. He sat around talking with some of his cronies around the stove, and an old fellow said, 'Tom, what you got your coat on for, you cold?' Tom said, 'No, I ain't cold.' 'Well, why you wearing your coat then?' 'Well, I ain't got no shirt.' 'Well,' he said, 'why ain't you got a shirt?' He said, 'I'm getting it washed.' And the fellow said, 'Ain't you got but one shirt?' He said, 'Hell, no. You think a fellow wants a million shirts.'" General Ferguson said, "That's the way I feel about cut-offs. I got one good one and I don't want a million. " He always had some story like that to illustrate his experiences to pound it home.

He was a great friend of mine. He used to give big parties to all of his District Engineers down in New Orleans at Mardi Gras. He gave us the greatest [parties]. He'd take the inspection boat, the *Mississippi*, down and all the officers. Their wives would go down and stay with Mrs. Ferguson in their house. They had a house in New Orleans, though General Ferguson was living in Vicksburg. But they'd go and stay with her. He had tickets to all the balls. He had membership to the Boston Club, which was the swank club of New Orleans, and we just partied all the time. We had the biggest to-do you ever saw. We'd spend most of the night going around to these balls and so on. Go home in the morning in a taxi, go back to the boat—we officers were sleeping on the boat—in broad daylight, and we started out again about noon. That was a great time. I don't know whether Mardi Gras is like that now with those parades and the balls and all the festivities.

Q: Well, they must be; the New Orleans District is still considered a good assignment.

A: It would be a good one.

Q: Most of them along there are. Well, General, before we get into the Philippines, I want to go back over some of this.

A: I don't know where this comes in or if it has anything to do with it. But I'll say this—that I would not change my career, my opportunities, for any other profession or anything I've ever known. I've got a cousin who is a lawyer and has been very successful. I have other friends who have been very fortunate and wealthy as doctors and engineers in civil life, but as far as I'm concerned, there is nothing like my military career—its satisfactions. I wouldn't trade it for anything that I've ever known. It's been most rewarding, most satisfactory. I don't know that it's done anybody else any good, but personally I think it's the greatest thing I've ever known and I would not change it for anything, any experience or any profession that I've ever heard of or any experiences. And I've seen a number of them. To me, it's been a great opportunity, marvelous opportunity, to serve. I'm not over patriotic. I believe in this country and all that. Just personal satisfaction. The opportunity that I've had, the places I've been, the things I've done, have been the greatest satisfaction and I don't know of anyone who has done better. I've got lots of friends around in different fields, but I don't know anyone who can offer as much as the things I have known and thought. Some have been hard. Some have been tough as could be, absolutely devastating. Some have been right on top of the world. I've lived; I've slept with a goat in a ditch as a brigadier general and I've lived in castles and palaces, but I wouldn't trade any and it's all good experience.

Q: You certainly made a great contribution, General.

A: I haven't made any contribution. It was just something I enjoyed and I wouldn't give up any of those experiences for any of them. The good ones and the bad ones. I've been scared to death. I've been cold. I've been hot as hell. I've gone from 65 below zero and I have been in heat in the desert at 156. So, it hasn't been all pleasure. But you had it all. You've tried everything there is and it's all been interesting and worthwhile. That's all I've got to say about it.

Q: Well, that's marvelous, sir. I wish we could get that word out to everybody right now when the Army again is in the bad part—

A: I wouldn't trade it. I've been through some awfully poor times when I scraped two nickels together in my pocket and I didn't know where the next one was coming from. I've been up on the top, too, after I got out

of the Army. Well, I had good experience in the Army. After I got out I had a first-class job here with a steel company. I was the chairman of the board and had a ten-year contract and that was fine. I made more money in that ten years than I had made in my whole career. And I became independent so far as that is concerned on that. Of course, the retired pay and so on. When I retired as a general, my pay was only about \$700 a month and I couldn't do any more than live in a little town at home and pay my bills and eat. I couldn't do anything. Of course, now it's about three or four times as much. For no reason at all. Well, maybe it was due all the time. But I know now as a retired officer, I get about \$2,000. In those days I only got \$700 and I had a family; well, I had a wife and so on. I haven't got anybody to support but myself and I got more money than I know what to do with. But that's the ups and downs of life.

Q: I think that your statement, "Maybe it was due all along" is true, and you just didn't get it. In 1955 when you retired, you still needed a lot more than that.

A: But we never did. We never did. Those were poverty wages in those days.

The Philippines

Q: You mentioned that you had wanted to go to the War College, but this job in the Philippines became available and had you not taken it you would have had to wait three years.

A: Oh, I never would have gotten it.

Q: I believe the job you started in there didn't have the significance of what you later did in the Philippines, as I recall?

A: Oh, it was the same thing. I was regimental commander of the 14th Engineers and Division Engineer of the Philippine Division. That was my job from the beginning.